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THE LADAKHI PRE-BUDDHIST MARRIAGE RITUAL.

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THE LADAKHI PRE-BUDDHIST MARRIAGE RITUAL.

(Translation and Notes.)

BY A. H. FRANCKE, LADAKH.

SOME time ago I published in *Mémoires de la Société Finno-ougrienne*, Helsingfors, some translations in German of folktales and of extracts from a Tibetan MS. relating to the Késar-Myths of Western Tibet. The publication of the Marriage Songs of the Ladákhs now undertaken is another step in the same direction. My object in these publications is to present means to the scientific world for unveiling the hitherto hidden treasures of the Pre-Buddhist Religion of Tibet. I was fortunate indeed to get hold of these wedding songs, just before they had vanished altogether. In Central and Upper Ladakh only mere reminiscences are left of them, although the gorgeous dress of the Nyopas and the scene before the house are still in vogue. In Lower Ladakh the songs have been preserved much better, but a large portion of them have ceased to be intelligible to the people. Thus whilst the first nine of the songs I collected were, certain passages excepted, generally understood by the ordinary man, the latter half of the collection consists more or less of a succession of unintelligible sounds. The reason may be, that the wedding ritual proved too hard a trial on the patience of the party and was cut short in many cases.

The method of reading has been as follows. All the songs were dictated slowly by the leader of the Nyopas to the village Munshi of Khalata, Yeshe Rig 'adzin, who wrote them down according to the actual sound. This copy proved to be very useful as far as Yeshe Rig 'adzin himself had understood the words. For disentangling the more obscure passages, however, the assistance of the mission schoolmaster of Leh, Shamuél aByoridan, and of other Ladákhs, possessed of common sense, had to be requisitioned. In this way, the first half of the collection has become fairly intelligible, whilst the latter half is still full of obscure passages.

It is necessary for the proper comprehension of these songs to direct the attention of the readers to the fact that the four points of the compass play a rather important rôle in the wedding songs, as well as in other Pre-Buddhist literature (vide *Ladakhi Songs* No. XV.). This

¹⁸ See Sprenger, II. 482. The Jewish dietary law appeared to Muhammed likewise in the light of a chastisement for forwardness. Abstemiousness from so many articles of food as are tabooed by the Jewish law naturally appeared strange to a people whose supply was rather scanty, and did not despise fallen camels. This latter custom was abrogated by Muhammed in Qor. vi. 146, who also did away with several old usages connected with the eating of certain animals (see vi. 143 to 147). He further forbade the eating of animals over which, when being slaughtered, the name of Alláh had not been mentioned (vi. 118 to 121). Nöldeke, p. 119, regards this verse as misplaced. "As to the Jews," Muhammed adds (v. 147), "we have forbidden them to eat everything that has a solid hoof, and of oxen and sheep did we prohibit them to eat the fat, save what the backs of both do bear, or the inwards of what is mixed with bone" (cf. S. xvi. 119). Muhammed reveals here a close intimacy with details of the Code, which he could not have gained from his own knowledge of the Pentateuch alone. I therefore regard all those passages as Medianian.

[FOOTNOTE DOES NOT PERTAIN TO
THIS ARTICLE.--ANALYST]

A collection of Ladakhi Proverbs.—By THE REV. H. FRANCKE, Moravian Missionary, Leh. Communicated by the Philological Secretary.

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The Ladakhi word for proverb is *gtamdpe* [pronounced *stamdpe*] which means 'word example.' *Stamdpe* is the general term for what might be called quotations, the shepherd's calender and the popular moral code.

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Ladakhi popular poetry has become famous for the frequent application of the laws of 'parallelism.' Many beautiful examples, illustrative of this form of poetry, will be noticed in the proverbs.

In the following each proverb will be treated in this way—

- (a) the Proverb in the orthography of Ladaki letter writing, (b) pronunciation, (c) literal translation [does not claim to be good English], (d) application, (e) grammatical and other notes.

Concerning the orthography of (b) the following will suffice: The vowels are the Italian vowels¹, *ā* rather like *a*. All accents given, refer only to the stress. *sh*=*ś*, *sh*=*ṣ*, *ng*=*ṅ*, *c*=*ç*, *ch*=*ch*, *j*=*j*, *ts*=*ts*, *ths*=*th*. The unaspirated Tenuis holds the mean between English tenuis and media. Single *r*=Hindustani *r*. The *r* preceding a consonant is like the German guttural *r*, following a consonant it is like the English *r*, spoken quickly.

THE PROVERBS.

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1. (a) དཔྱད་ཉིན་རིང་མོ་ལ་བྱང་གསུམ་དང་བྱོ་གསུམ།

མི་ཆོ་རིང་མོ་ལ་སྒྱིད་གསུམ་དང་སྤྱག་གསུམ།

- (b) *spid' nyin ring'moa drang' sumdang dro' sum*
mi'thse ring'moa skyid' sum dang dug' sum.

¹ They are long, when ending a syllable, short in all other cases.

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595 marriages. The woman's marriage, in this
 [601] case, is known as a *magpa* marriage. It
 428 differs from the *bagma* marriage in that
 581 the woman is head of the family. The
 592 husbands are married to her and she can
 do exactly as she wants with them.

595 The most important point to grasp in
 126 polyandry is that the house is the axis
 592 around which the system functions. In
 taking down genealogical notes I have,
 therefore, always given the family the
 name of the house.

595 A specialized case I came across was
 583 that of an only son of the house called
 428 Tsungarpa who married one woman,
 the heiress to the Bata house (see FIGURE
 1).¹ All her brothers were dead, so that

23 P. 213c FIGURE 1

The latter had been married off very early to Sonam of the Takpa household, in *bag-ma*, and Stobgyal had taken Tsering Yangdzen as his wife. He had then moved into the main part of the Tok-Tok house, and the two fathers had taken up their quarters in two small rooms on the second floor. Stobgyal had had two sons with his first wife, Tsering Murup and Tsering Norpel, and these two boys had also married polyandrously to become the rightful occupants of the *k'hang-chen*. They, their wife Chungnid and their two small children, Pandzom and Dok-pa, lived on the first floor, while Stobgyal remained in his quarters, provisionally. It appeared that he had not yet moved into a *k'hang-gu* as he should have done, because he had remarried after having become a widower, and had had five children by his second wife, Lha-dzom.

With so many people about the house, I found conditions a bit strenuous. The kitchen held a certain number of the children, and Lha-dzom was in there cooking. I went in to see her, but was soon driven out by the smoke, which had no chimney by which to escape, and filled the room down to about knee level. I did remain there for a short time to look round, with my head bent down to that height to keep my eyes from watering, but I soon gave it up and retreated to rejoin old Lobsang. We went out to take a photograph in which he, his brother, their son, Chungnid, and Sonam Döndrup, Lha-dzom's second son, agreed to pose, the two last ones with Dok-pa and Gon-po in their arms (see Fig. 37).

Then we went in again, and sat down on carpets in the largest room on the first floor, which happened to be the one in which the *lha-k'hang* was, and had a cup of tea while we continued to discuss their family affairs. I enquired about their fields and the cultivation, the trade and their travels, and heard how their polyandry was regulated. It is from such information from these people and from others that I was able to get a clear picture of the conditions in which polyandry flourished in Ladak.

Lobsang Tok-Tok complained bitterly of the "immorality" of young people in Leh. He said that polyandry was no longer desired by the younger generation, and that this was all due to outside influence from Indian and Turki traders from Sinkiang, and from European missionaries and travellers who were perpetually speaking against the time-honoured custom of polyandrous matrimony such as Ladakis and Tibetans had always practised, and were introducing the "bad habit" of monogamous marriage.

He asked me how it was that we were so wealthy in Europe without

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[115]
[591]
[888] Sonam, the eldest son of the heiress living in the little house on the family property with her *mag-pa*, was our informant. He told us that his mother and father had moved from the big house, in which he lived, some ten years ago. With them, went the youngest sister, then still unmarried, Chorol. The two eldest sisters, Putit and Yangdzen, were already married out in *bag-ma* at the time. The eldest, Putit, was married in polyandry in the Goba household, and I asked Nono Tse-P'hün to take us on to that family next, which he did.

[888]
[591] As soon as Sonam and his two brothers, Rabgye and P'huntzok Stobldan, had married Tsewang Putit, they had taken the *k'hang-chen* over. Very soon afterwards, Sonam Dorje, their eldest child and only son, now aged eight, was born, and subsequently they had had three daughters, now aged six, five and two respectively.

Chorol had only recently been married off in *bag-ma* to Tashi Murup of the Raku household; that was the reason for which she did not yet have any children.

P'hüntzok Stobldan, so Nono Tse-P'hün told me later, although the youngest husband of the common wife, whom he shared with his brothers, was not happy in polyandry. He wanted very much to leave and become the *mag-pa* husband of an heiress: the daughter of one Gyur-med (*aGyur-med*), the head of a household which I have marked down in my notes as being called *Tiapa*. This must be a mistake, however, as the sound *Tia* does not exist in Tibetan (it may perhaps be *Tra-pa*).

[114]
[194] Tsewang Putit was standing outside the house, near the entrance gate to the compound, during the conversation which we had with her eldest husband just inside the main room. We went out again to take a group photograph of the family (see Fig. 38), and when I had done this, I turned and spoke to her through the interpreter. She was holding her youngest child, the little girl, Sonam Putit, in her arms, and I asked if she could tell me who its father was.

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[126] She looked surprised and looked away. I insisted, but she shook her head, and Nono Tse P'hün said that she could not tell. I then suggested that she could surely calculate backwards as to who the father was, and find out who was with her at the probable time of conception. This was put to her, but she still refused to say. Finally, after the interpreter had teased her somewhat, and the husbands had laughed her into talking, she said that she was an honest woman, and did not have any preference. This seemed to satisfy Sonam and the others very much, for they shook their heads approvingly and looked at Nono Tse P'hün as he translated to me. It was obvious that Tsewang Putit had said the

595 form which I gave it then. I have since learned Tibetan, and I had the
114 good fortune to be able to review it with my Ladaki informant, Nono
Tse-P'hün, in Kalimpong, on the 3rd December 1953, so that I have
made many corrections in the spelling, and have given what now ap-
pears to be the correct orthography of the names.

595 The Bata household was situated quite close to Leh, in the immediate
601 vicinity, like the first families which we visited: It consisted of four
[115] people, one elderly man called Döndrup, his son Murup, the latter's
wife Palkid, and her *porjag* whose name was Paljor; he was the young-
est of the Shing-k'hang-pa household which we had examined earlier,
and the genealogy of which is given in Table 33. All these people acted
as informants, Nono Tse-P'hün gathering information for me not from
only one of them but rather from them all together as they stood out-
side their house and talked with us. They all lived in the Bata *k'hang-*
[591] *chen*, there being no reason, as we shall see, for Döndrup, the elder,
to go to a *k'hang-gu*. The house was of the usual type, standing close
to the cultivations. We remained outside, and spoke to these people in
[124] the field, as can be seen from the photograph (Fig. 41), which I took
at the conclusion of the interview.

In Table 34, in which the genealogy of the *Tsong-k'har-pa* (*bTsong-*
mK'har-pa) household is given, it will be seen that the Bata household
grew out of it in the following way. Döndrup's father, Tsong-gu Malik,
now dead, was married to a woman called Sonam of the Bata house-
hold, one which was well-known in Leh. They had three children, all
boys, of whom Döndrup was the youngest. With the elder brothers,
P'hüntzok and Pe-leg, he married polyandrously a woman named Putit
of P'ho-sang household. And with this common wife, the brothers had
no less than twelve children, of whom six died and six survived.

[428] Döndrup's mother, Sonam, died after all her brothers, and no heirs
remained for the Bata household from which she had come; none were
even adopted it seemed. For this reason, after P'hüntzok and Pe-leg
had taken over the *k'hang-chen* of the *Tsong-k'har-pa* house, Döndrup
was made heir to the Bata household, that is the one of his mother.
He went and lived there immediately, and the sons he had with his
brothers' common wife, helped him to cultivate the land there.

[199] The eldest of these boys, Ishe Paljor, together with his brother, Ishe
[553] (now dead), then married a certain Moslem woman, who took the name
Senghe Tsomo when she became Buddhist (as she should to marry
[591] Buddhists). These children then took over the *k'hang-chen*, and P'hün-
tzok and Pe-leg moved into the *k'hang-gu* at *Tsong-k'har-pa*. A third